

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 314

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT AU PRINCE 1857

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR HA

SUBJ: PRESIDENT REORIENTS PROGRAM FOR HAITIAN NATIONAL AIRLINES

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 1529

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT DUVALIER HAS PERSONALLY REVIEWED THE STATUS AND PLANNED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR THE HAITIAN NATIONAL AIRLINES, HAITI AIR TRANSPORT (HAT). HE HAS DETERMINED THAT THE AMBITIOUS PROGRAM OF INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS (UNDER THE NAME OF HAT) AND DOMESTIC FLIGHTS (UNDER THE NAME OF HAITI AIR INTER) PLANNED BY BOARD OF DIRECTORS SHOULD BE UNDERTAKEN ONLY AFTER SUITABLE STUDIES. HIS PERSONAL INTERVENTION CAME AS A RESULT OF INFIGHTING WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF BOTH THE DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN SECTORS OF HAT, WHICH RESULTED IN THE OUSTER (TEMPORARY) OF THE CURRENT U.S. MANAGERS OF THE DOMESTIC LINE, NAMELY TURKS AND CAICOS AIRWAYS (TCA). AS A RESULT, IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT THE SWING TOWARD FRENCH INFLUENCE ON CIVIL AVIATION HAS BEEN ARRESTED, AND THAT GOH NOW WILL BE MORE INTERESTED IN HELP FROM U.S. AIRLINES. PRESSURE FROM GOH FOR CAB AUTHORIZATION FOR HAT FLIGHTS TO NEW YORK MAY ALSO RELAX AT LEAST TEMPORARILY. END SUMMARY.

2. THE INFIGHTING AS TO WHO WOULD CONTROL OR INFLUENCE THE HAITIAN NATIONAL AIRLINE, WHICH BROKE OUT IN THE PRESS ON JUN 20 (SEE REFTTEL), CONTINUED THROUGH THE MONTH. FINALLY,
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ON JUNE 30, THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY WROTE TCA IN-

FORMING COMPANY THAT IT MUST STOP ALL DOMESTIC FLIGHTS ON JULY 1, 1975, BECAUSE THE NATIONAL AIRLINE, HAITI AIR INTER, WOULD START OPERATIONS ON THAT DAY. TCA TRIED TO CONTINUE FLYING, CLAIMING THAT THE COMPANY WAS NOT OPERATING ON ITS OWN, BUT RATHER AS MANAGERS FOR HAITI AIR INTER. HOWEVER, ON JULY 1, AIRPORT MANAGER WAS TOLD TO GIVE THE COMPANY CLEARANCE FOR INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS ONLY. ANOTHER "HAITI AIR INTER" BEGAN OPERATIONS ON JULY 1, UNDER THE DIRECTION HAT AND USING A LEASED BEECHCRAFT AND ONE OF THE DC-5:S PROVIDED BY FRANCE, FLOWN BY A HIRED FRENCH PILOT. THE NEW LINE, ALTHOUGH PUBLISHING ITS INTENTION OF INITIATING FLIGHTS, NEVER INFORMED OTHER AIRLINES OR PUBLISHED TIMING OF ITS FLIGHTS.

3. AFTER SEVERAL DAY OF EFFORTS, TCA MANAGED TO REACH PRESIDENT AND ASK HIM TO RECONSIDER DECISION ON HAITI AIR INTER. PRESIDENT THEN CALLED A MEETING OF INDIVIDUALS MOST CONCERNED, INCLUDING BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF HAITI AIR TRANSPORT. REPORTEDLY, THE PRESIDENT CONDUCTED SEARCHING INQUIRY DURING MEETING ASKING QUESTION ON INSURANCE, ON RELATIVE SAFETY, ON SPARE PARTS AVAILABILITY, MAINTENANCE AND ECONOMY OF OPERATIONS OF THE DC-3 AS COMPARED TO TWIN OTTER AIRCRAFT BING OPERATED BY TCA. PRESIDENT EVIDENTLY CONCLUDED THAT OPERATIONS OF HAITI AIR INTER HAD BEEN INITIATED WITHOUT SUFFICIENT ADVANCE STUDIES AND PREPARATION. HE ORDERED A COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED WHICH WOULD STUDY THOROUGHLY DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONAL SET-UPS AND DIFFERENT AIRPLANES AND THEN RECOMMEND BEST TYPE OF OPERATION FOR HAITIAN DOMESTIC AIRLINE. IN MEANTIME, TCA WAS AUTHORIZED TO RESUME FLIGHTS UNDER NAME OF HAITI AIR INTER. A NEW MANAGEMENT CONTRACT WOULD BE NEGOTIATED, COVERING A 3 OR 4 YEAR PERIOD RATHER THAN 10, AS HAD BEEN ORIGINALLY PROPOSED. THE INFERENCE DRAWN FROM THE MEETING WAS THAT GOH WOULD FIRST CONCENTRATE ON DEVELOPING DOMESTIC SERVICE, AND THEN TRY AGAIN TO GET LANDING RIGHTS IN U.S. FOR THE INITIATION OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICE.

4. COMMENTS: ALTHOUGH GOH HAS DEFINITELY NOT GIVEN UP ITS IDEA OF HAVING A NATIONAL AIRLINE OFFERING BOTH DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS, IT NOW SEEMS LIKELY THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL DEVELOP ITS PROGRAM MORE SLOWLY AND CAREFULLY. THE SWITCH IN POLICY WAS A MAJOR SET-BACK TO HAITIAN DIRECTOR OF CIVIL
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AVIATION, LEON JEUNE (WHO HAS BEEN CHIEF ADVOCATE OF INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS FOR HAT AND WHO HAS ALSO BEEN VERY SYMPATHETIC TO FRENCH INFLUENCE IN THE AVIATION FIELD), AND TO THE PRINCIPAL STOCKHOLDERS OF HAT (PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARY AUGUSTE DOUYON AND DIRECTOR OF THE REGIE DU TABAC, HENRI SICLAIT). IT WAS ALSO A SLAP TO SECRETARY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MURAT, WHO APPARENTLY HAD ACCEPTED WITHOUT QUESTION THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF HIS CIVIL AVIATION DIRECTOR. POSSIBILITY

NOW EXISTS THAT U.S. INFLUENCE IN HAITIAN AVIATION WILL INCREASE.
TCA, EASTERN AIRLINES, AND NORTHCENTRAL AIRLINES ALL APPEAR
ANXIOUS TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE REQUIRED TO DEVELOP HAT INTO
A VIABLE AIRLINE.
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